The London Theatre

"ALTHOUGH it is a commonplace of conversation that the war has awakened the people of this country to reality," observes a writer in "The Athenæum," "it is occasionally a little difficult to avoid the suspicion that the only reality to which we have in truth been awakened may be the reality of war."

And pursuing the tenor of this contemplation, the writer notes:

"We are in the habit of closing our eyes so resolutely to all other issues that one sometimes feels tempted to parry the question, 'Do you know there is a war on?' with the counter question, 'Do you know there are other things on besides a war?' Because that is a staring reality which must not be blinked. There is the war—and there are the home fires; and the song-writer is perfectly sound in suggesting that if we suffer the home fires to die out, we shall one day awaken to the shivering reality that, if there is nothing to live for, there was nothing to die for either.

"And so, when people declare, as they often do declare, that serious discussion of art, of music, of literature, of the theatre, is out of place in these unhappy times, they lose sight of the fact that war is a matter of life as well as of death, and that to have 'found ourselves' as a nation at last is but a melancholy discovery if we have 'found ourselves' only as a nation of warriors. 'Come, come,' they say, 'it will be time enough to discuss the drama and all that when peace is signed.' But will it be time enough? Sometimes I wonder whether it is not already too late. Certainly, it is not going to be easy to work back to beauty when we have willingly let go her hand and lost ourselves in such a labyrinth of horror.

"IN London the theatre has deteriorated with alarming steadiness since the war broke out; and though its descent might be described as a descent not so much from Avernus as from Primrose Hill, it seems to have pretty well reached sea-level (which is the main point), and may sink beyond recall if some sort of lifeboat is not promptly launched. What we need is a counteraction to that incorrigible blackleg, the revue, the chief aim of which appears to be to hold all the legitimate expedients of the art of stage illusion up to ridicule.

"The modern revue 'gives the show away,' lays bare the whole theatrical bag of tricks. It tears off the masks of comedy and tragedy, and reveals a lot of silly people admitting that they are pretending to be something they are not. Its scenes are laid in the wings, in actresses' dressing-rooms, in managers' offices, outside stage doors. Its jokes are Hamlet smoking a gold-tipped cigarette and rain being rattled in a box. It 'puts the public wise,' and insinuates that the spectator who has been moved by a performance of, say, the 'Œdipus Tyrannus' has simply been very badly 'had.'

"The result is that, quite apart from its willingness, the actual capacity of the public for being illusionized is rapidly diminishing, and the instinctive attitude that is growing up among audiences is the attitude of the small boy toward the conjurer of the party.

"All this is having a marked effect on the writers of our 'legitimate drama,' which now consists almost exclusively of light comedies. Some of the plays now being acted in the West End are so uncertainly written that it is almost impossible to tell whether the dramatists intend you to believe in them or not.

"For example, in Mr. Harold Terry's 'General Post' at the Haymarket—a play with many merits—the author frequently holds his characters up to ridicule, obviously suggesting that 'you must not really believe all this'—and you obediently do not; till he suddenly founds on you, so to speak, with a passage in a completely different key which is intended more or less to bring a lump into your throat, with the result that this continual tossing from the artificial to the real, and the real to the artificial, reduces one to a state of limp, submissive bewilderment.

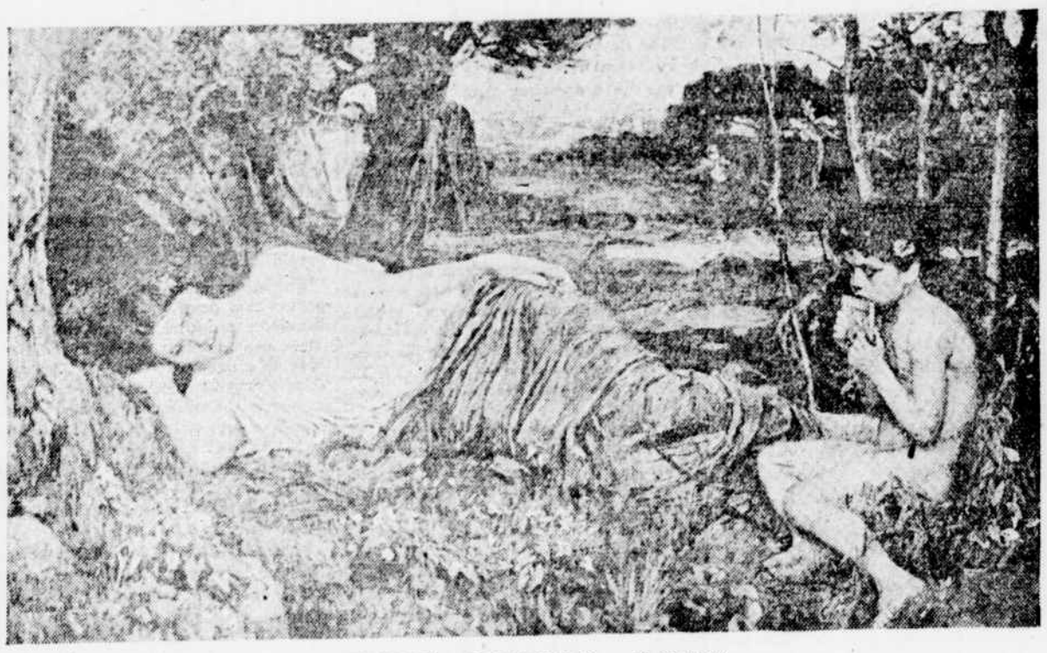
"Mr. Cyril Harcourt's 'Wanted a Husband' is another comedy of this description. . . . The same disconcerting error of treatment is to be found, in a subtler but far more unendurable form, in Sir James Barrie's 'The Old Lady Shows Her Medals,' with its sly passages about wounds and its sentimental passages about death—the unpleasant taste of which is happily dissipated by Mr. Milne's charming and uncompromisingly artificial 'Wurzel-Flummery,' a lesson to all comic dramatists.

"YET the public now delights in these plays. Actions which in real life would fill us with indignation pass on the stage as delicious manifestations of high spirits if the 'heroine' who commits them is pretty enough or the 'hero' sufficiently personable.

"And all this, not because our ethical standpoint has undergone any marked revolution, not because we have become more liberal-minded, but because—well—after all—it's only a play—the actors and actresses are quite nice people, we have heard, in private life, and the author a perfect gentleman—and who cares twopence about the fine points of dramatic art in war time, anyway?

"Clearly, the public will not take the drama seriously if dramatists do not take the drama seriously themselves. And if the 'legitimate' stage begins to pander to the new revue spirit by throwing up the sponge in full view of the audience, the serious lover of the drama may as well sit at home and entertain himself as best he can with a kaleidoscope."

The Art of Mr. Waterhouse



"THE PIPING BOY"
By J. W. WATERHOUSE, R. A.
(By permission of Major the Hon. Alec P. Henderson) —Courtesy of *The International Studio*

THE recent death of J. W. Waterhouse, R. A., has been keenly felt in art circles, where he had achieved a position of positive and highly individual distinction. It is pointed out that while many brushes of the period may be more robust and assertive, more forcible in their manner of stating convictions, none of them possesses quite the "subtle sympathy" of the brush now relinquished—quite its "sensitiveness and tender appeal."

J. W. WATERHOUSE, R. A.
—Courtesy of *The International Studio*

The personality of this painter is spoken of as being as attractive as it was exceptional—"a personality which quite possibly many people were unable to understand, but which to many others had a particular fascination." This is the opinion of a writer, A. L. Baldry, in "The International Studio," who continues:

"Artistically he (Mr. Waterhouse) belonged to a world of his own creation, and he peopled this world with a type of humanity that was very rightly related to its surroundings. These beings, the product of his fancy, lived in an atmosphere of romance and kept strictly aloof from the materialism of modern existence; they were invested with an air of dainty melancholy, which, however, was not allowed to degenerate into morbidity, and they roamed languorously through shady groves or in fields starred with flowers. No hint of stress or struggle, no jarring note of violent emotion, broke the quiet of this world; it was a place apart in which life moved placidly and followed a peaceful course, and in which dream people played their appointed parts with no thought for the strenuous realities which seethe beyond its boundaries.

"Yet this gentle, restful art was never wanting in dramatic significance. One of the best characteristics of Mr. Waterhouse's work was its power to carry conviction and to tell its story persuasively, and one of its finest qualities was the subtlety with which the dramatic point of the subject chosen was brought out. Nor was there any lack of force in the manner of his pictorial statement. As a craftsman in art he was admirably accomplished, and his direct, expressive method of handling was of the greatest possible assistance to him in the working out of his pictures. A bloodless, tentative technique, an undecided mode of dealing with executive problems, would have robbed his imaginings of half their authority and would have taken the meaning out of his art—sureness of touch and thorough control over the processes of painting are never more necessary than when the artist seeks to make credible a delicate abstraction or to convey to others subtleties of sentiment."

In the opinion of Mr. Baldry, this artist's claim to be counted among the best of the modern romanticist painters cannot be contested, "for he had in a very high degree the capacity to invest his paintings with the right atmosphere of poetic suggestion, and it was on the strength of his poetic sense that he rose to the position which he occupied in British art."

Sir Walter Scott

SIR WALTER SCOTT, Scottish poet and novelist, was born at Edinburgh on the 15th of August, 1771—146 years ago. In his own fragmentary biography he gave his pedigree, as follows:

"My birth was neither distinguished nor sordid. According to the prejudices of my country, it was esteemed gentle, as I was connected, though remotely, with ancient families on both my father's and mother's side. My father's grandfather was Walter Scott, well-known by the name of Beardie. He was the second son of Walter Scott, first laird of Raeburn, who was the third son of Sir William Scott and the grandson of Walter Scott, commonly called in tradition Auld Watt of Harden. I am, therefore, lineally descended from that ancient chieftain and from his fair dame, the Flower of Yarrow . . ."

William Minto, in his biographical sketch of Sir Walter Scott, says:

"It was as a poet that he first made his literary reputation. 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' appeared in January, 1805, and at once became widely popular. It sold more rapidly than poem had ever sold before. . . . The success of the 'Lay' decided finally that literature was to be the main business of Scott's life. . . . 'The Lady of the Lake' (May, 1810) was received with enthusiasm. It made the Perthshire highlands fashionable for tourists and raised the post-horse duty in Scotland. Scott died in Tweedside at Abbotsford on the 21st of September, 1832.

"Besides being a poet and novelist, he was sheriff-deputy of Selkirkshire, clerk of sessions, hospital laird, publisher and printer, and miscellaneous man of letters. His writings include ballads, poems, the Waverley novels, translations and a 'Life of Napoleon.'"

A portion of the first canto of Scott's celebrated "Lady of the Lake" is here reproduced:

The Lady of the Lake

THE CHASE

I

THE stag at eve had drunk his fill,
Where danced the moon on Monan's rill,
And deep his midnight lair had made
In lone Glenartney's hazel shade;
But when the sun his beacon red
Had kindled on Benvoirlich's head,
The deep-mouthed bloodhounds' heavy bay
Resounded up the rocky way,
And faint, from further distance borne,
Were heard the clanging hoof and horn.

II

AS Chief, who hears his warder call,
"To arms! The foeman storm the wall!"
The antlered monarch of the waste
Sprang from his heathery couch in haste.
But ere his fleeting career he took,
The dewdrops from his flanks he shook;
Like crested leader proud and high
Tossed his beamed frontlet to the sky;
A moment gazed adown the dale,
A moment sniffed the tainted gale,
A moment listened to the cry,
That thickened as the chase drew nigh;
Then, as the headmost foes appeared
With one brave bound the copse he cleared,
And, stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild heaths of Uam-Var.

III

YELLED on the view the opening pack;
Rock, cleft and cavern paid them back;
To many a mingled sound at once
The awakened mountain gave response.
A hundred dogs bayed deep and strong,
Clattered a hundred steeds along,
Their peal the merry horns rung out,
A hundred voices joined the shout;
With hark and whoop and wild halloo,
No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew.
Far from the tumult fled the roe,
Close in her covert cowered the doe,
The falcon, from her cairn on high,
Cast on the rout a wandering eye,
Till far beyond her piercing ken
The hurricane had swept the glen.
Faint, and more faint, its failing din
Returned from cavern, cliffs and linn,
And silence settled, wide and still,
On the lone wood and mighty hill.

Samuel Butler

IT IS a very commonplace thing to say that Fame comes most often in the footsteps of Death. Perhaps it is the diffusion of intelligence that has changed all that; at any rate, it is true in modern times that few potentially big figures of literature get through an entire lifetime without some notice from the hunters of new sensations. There are exceptions, of course, and Samuel Butler was one of them. Not the Samuel Butler who wrote "Hudibras," which is mentioned in all the textbooks but which doubtless few persons ever read. It is another Butler who concerns this writing, a Butler who died in 1902 in much the same circumstances as that sweet lady of whom Wordsworth wrote—"And few could know when Lucy ceased to be."

Despite all this strange obscurity, the name of Samuel Butler has become the shining centre of what might almost be called a new literary cult. There are few now even among the second rank of observers who are not able to give the names of everything Butler wrote without once including "Hudibras," though it is William Lyon Phelps who confesses to a reversion to that volume when he first heard Butler's name.

THE encyclopædias have little to say about him—even the Britannica, which somewhere now bears the charge of propaganda for English culture. However, it does tell that he went to Cambridge; that he was intended for the church, but that his opinions were too much for the intention, so he sailed to New Zealand and made a modest competence raising sheep—a competence which in quite the most approved literary manner he later lost in bad investments. But the New Zealand memories were destined to live on and later formed the basis for one of Butler's best known satires, "Erewhon," an ironic picture of England, but it is "The Way of All Flesh" which has left the greatest impression on the literary minded of to-day, due no doubt to the indignant reminder that Shaw gave the ignorant in his preface to "Major Barbara":

"It drives one almost to despair of English literature when one sees so extraordinary a study of English life as Butler's posthumous 'Way of All Flesh' making so little impression that when, some years later, I produce plays in which Butler's extraordinarily fresh, free and future-piercing suggestions have an obvious share I am met with nothing but vague cacklings about Ibsen and Nietzsche. . . . Really, the English do not deserve to have great men."

"THE WAY OF ALL FLESH" is probably the model on which most young English novelists, such as Coningsby Dawson, Compton Mackenzie, Hugh Walpole, J. D. Beresford and W. L. George, have produced stories of youthful reaction against some phases of their life and spiritual evolution in the slums of London. But what distinguishes Butler is lacking in most of his unprofessing followers: an attack, that is no less terrific for being subtle and hidden, on the hypocrisy of the Church and of certain types of virtuous people in England. Butler taught Shaw the manner of it, but for all the brilliancy of the discipline it is possible to find an intellectual enjoyment in the disguised ridicule of Butler that the ofttimes brazen literary attack of Shaw seldom presents.

The extent to which the Butler cult has spread may be evidenced by the number of the persons who are beginning to quarrel about him.

Dr. Phelps is a little shocked by him, by the Butlerian attack on "professing Christians," but he concludes, "although I firmly believe this is a diabolical novel, I think it will prove to be of good service to Christianity."

IT IS strange therefore to find John Butler Yeats, who went to school with Butler, saying in "The Seven Arts": "It is not true that Butler had talent. To be a painter after the manner of John Bellini was for years the passion of his life. It was vain; he had no talent." But Yeats is kinder to his old schoolfellow in the following picture he has drawn of him:

"He always occupied one place in the school chosen so that he could be as close as possible to the model and might paint with small brushes his kind of John Bellini art. There he would stand very intent and mostly quite silent, intent also on our casual conversation, watchful for the moment when he could make some sally of wit that would crush his victim.

"He had thick eyebrows and gray eyes—or were they light hazel? These eyes would sometimes look tired as he plied his hopeless task of learning how to paint. But the discovery of any mental slavery or insincerity among our band of students would bring a dangerous light into them, and he would say things that perhaps hurt very much men who were absolutely sincere, however mistaken.

"Then Butler, who respected, as he often told me, every kind of sincerity, would humble himself and make apologies that were not always accepted, and in the gray eyes, like a little fire on a cold hearth, I would see a melting kindness that it must have been hard to resist."

IT IS Willard Huntington Wright, literary editor of "The New York Evening Mail," who appears among the early critics to throw doubt upon the believing ones. Mr. Wright, who views Butler from the vantage point of a standardized æsthetic theory, declares:

"He certainly has written nothing to justify the preposterous eulogy which has been heaped upon him. Butler was a shallow thinker and an inept novelist, and his position in modern literature was merely that of a pioneer satirist. Shaw was his ardent disciple and imitator; and it is one of the proverbial ironies of fate that the lesser man should have achieved the greater glory. . . . Judged purely as a work of art 'The Way of All Flesh' is a distinctly second-rate performance."

As against the thumbs down of Mr. Wright is the judgment of Francis Hackett, expressed in an introduction to a new edition of "Erewhon." It is of "Erewhon" that Mr. Hackett says: "It is not an impeccable work, but so long as vision opens life and wisdom quickens it, so long as sympathy quickens life and humor corrects it, 'Erewhon' will have its commission."

As for the reader, he may have his choice.

Current War Poetry

The Man in the Trench

CAN you not hear me, young man in the street?
Is it nothing to you who pass by,
Who down the dim-lit ways in thousands roam?
From here I watch you, through the driving sleet,
Under the evening sky,
Hurrying home.
Home!—how the word sounds like a bell—
I wonder can you know, as I know well,
That in this trench
Of death and stench
I stand between your home and hell.

I am the roof that shields you from the weather,
I am the gate that keeps the brigand back,
When pillage, fire, and murder come together,
I am the wall that saves your home from sack.
Man! when you look upon the girl you prize,
Can you imagine horror in those eyes?
You have not seen, you cannot understand,
This trench is England, all this ruined land
Is where you wander, street, or field, or strand,
Save for God's grace, and for the guns that rest
Upon this dripping mudbank of the west.
Our blood has stained your threshold—will you stain
Your soul, give nothing and take all our gain?
Why did I come? I ask not, nor repent;
Something blazed up inside me, and I went.
The khaki fringe is frayed, and now a rent
Needs men—needs men, and I am almost spent.
Night, and the "ready" . . . so sleep well, my friend . . .
The guns again are going . . . I must stick it to the end.

—James Bernard Fagan, in *The London Daily Telegraph*.

Next Morning

I

TO-DAY the sun shines bright,
The skies are fair;
There is a delicate freshness in the air,
Which, like a nimble sprite,
Doth play upon my cheek and lift my hair.
And, as I look about me, lo!
I see a world I do not know!
As though some soft celestial beam,
Some clean and wholesome grace,
Had purged half the horror of the place
To a strange beauty.—*Was it, then, a dream,*
That ghostly march but yesternight,
Beneath the moon's uncertain light,
When chill at heart we picked our way
Through dreadful, silent things, that lay
About our path on either hand?
Was it a dream? Is this the self-same land,
The land we pass'd through then?
How strange it seems!—Yet 'tis the same!
I see from here the path by which we came,
The tumbled soil, the shatter'd trees are there:
And there, in desolation sleeping,
Almost too pitiful for weeping,
The little village—once the home of men!
Aye, the whole scene is there,
As desperate in its abandonment,
As melancholy-wild and savage-bare
As then:—but somehow in this warm, bright air
It all seems different!
The same, and yet I know it not!

II

Thus much I see.—*But there's a spot*
That's hidden from mine eyes.
Behind the ruin'd church it lies,
Where gaping vaults, beneath the nave,
Have made a dreadful kind of cave;
And there before the cavern's mouth
A dark and stagnant pool is spread,
So silent and so still!
I saw it last i' th' pale moonlight;
And I could think that shapes uncouth
Crept from that cave at dead of night
With ghoulish stealth, to feast their fill
Upon the pale and huddled dead!
Yet now,
Haply, beneath this warm sunlight,
Even that fearsome pool is bright
Under the cavern's brow!
So outward-fair, that few might guess
The secret of its loathsomeness,
Nor know what nameless things are done
There, with the setting of the sun!

—E. A. Wodehouse (2d Lieut. Scots Guards) in *Fortnightly Review*.

The Battlefield of The Marne

A Year After

By ALLEN TUCKER

FLAGS in the field,
Flags, flags and flags;
Blowing straight out in the bright wind;
Blowing straight out over the green graves;
Blowing straight out by the white crosses.
The fields rest.
The sheep graze.
The birds fly yellow into the level sun,
And the flags, the flags blow straight out,
Blue, white and red;
Straight to the East,
Straight against the foe,
Gay, free, and fierce—
With the terrible defiance of the dead.

Decorations by Hugh Ferriss

—From *Vanity Fair*

Star-Spangled Banner

MANY people have remarked the shame-faced way in which the Great American People, now that the United States is at war, try—and fail—to sing their national anthem. It has been admitted that no one knows the words. But the result is equally inarticulate when the words are printed on the programme, as they were at the recent series of Civic Concerts. Aleister Crowley, in the current issue of "Vanity Fair," offers a saner explanation. His view of the rationale of the matter follows:

"America has a tremendous tune—one of the most stirring ever written. (Now credited beyond doubt to John Stafford Smith, Gloucester, 1750, London 1802,—a melody well known in this country during Revolutionary days, when various texts were sung to it.) But Francis Scott Key (September 14, 1814) wrote in the then highly popular lilt of 'Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime?' and he spoiled the whole thing—and over and over again—by putting in a long syllable where he most needed a short one.

"'O, say can you see by the dawn's early light' is all right but for 'dawn's early' which has to be pronounced 'dawnsily' if it is to be properly sung. 'O, say can you see at the dawn of the light' would go perfectly. This is not a very bad place; an effort will take you over it; but worse follows. 'Whose broad stripes and bright stars' is six long syllables. Whose stripes and whose stars is a little better; but the 'whose' is always too long, especially before a double or triple consonant. Sing it 'O standard of stars' or 'O banner of stars' and there would be no difficulty.

"Again, the line ending 'half conceals, half discloses' asks too much of the breath. You have to sing '—ceals, half discl' in the same time as you would take to sing 'daintily.'

"'As it blows, covers up or discloses' is a good deal easier.

"What a swollen-tongue feeling one gets in trying to sing even 'Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.' Always the same trouble of too many consonants. Try 'The boss has amended the bad resolution' and it might be appointed for use in Tammany Hall as a Democratic rallying song.

"Something of the sort occurs in nearly every line of this blessed hymn of ours, but the best choral steeplechaser ever foaled is bound to come down over the Heaven-rescued land fence. 'Vnr' and 'dl' are not happy combinations for the people who objected to the Russian offensive because it obliged them to try to say Przemysl. 'Heavenly land' is a bit nearer the mark. This is not to say that 'heavenly' is the right word to use; it is not the word, as a matter of fact, that I should use. And surely it is better to wait for a commission from the President to set this whole jumble right. Quite enough now for us to amend the sound without attention to the sense!

"Observe that even 'star-spangled' itself is a little difficult, especially before 'banner.' 'Rsp' and 'ngl' and 'db' constitute a formidable network of barbed wire entanglements for most voices. 'Star-bestrewn' would be a little better, but not much. 'Spangled' is a dreadfully tinselly word, suggesting a circus, anyhow.) Probably there isn't a perfect word with the desired meaning: English is horribly deficient in 'short' syllables."

Mr. Crowley concludes by calling attention to the contemporary recruiting song, "Over There," by that "really great poet, George M. Cohan." This achievement, which follows, Mr. Crowley is pleased to hold up as a "masterpiece," recently made by Miss Nora Bayes "an essential part of every cultivated New Yorker's home life":

Johnnie get your gun, get your gun, get your gun,
Take it on the run, on the run, on the run;
Hear them calling you and me,
Every son of liberty;
Hurry right away, no delay, go to-day,
Make your daddy glad, to have such a lad;
Tell your sweetheart not to pine,
To be proud her boy's in line.

Chorus

Over there, over there,
Send the word, send the word, over there;
That the Yanks are coming, the Yanks are coming,
The drums rum-tumming, ev'rywhere.
So prepare, say a pray'r,
Send the word, send the word, to beware;
We'll be over, we're coming over,
And we won't come back till it's over,
Over there, over there.
Johnnie get your gun, get your gun, get your gun;
Johnnie show the Hun you're a son of a gun,
Hoist the flag and let her fly,
Yankee Doodle, do or die;
Pack your little kit, show your grit, do your bit;
Yankees, to the ranks, from the towns and the tanks;
Make your mother proud of you,
And the old Red, White and Blue.

Chorus

Over there, over there, etc.

"Artistic Stimulators"

A PLEA for the support of present-day American artists by appreciative patronage is made by Baron de Meyer in "Vanity Fair," accompanied by the plaint that American men of wealth spend hundreds of millions of dollars in acquiring the art of bygone days, which does not encourage a truly national American art. He continues:

"A young artist in this country must either face starvation or else consent to 'adapt' his art to commercial purposes; which is only another way of saying that he must lower his standards and ideals so as to bring them to the level on which they are likely to appeal to the taste of the uninspired public.

"Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent every year by American 'patrons' in acquiring masterpieces of bygone days; panels by Fragonard, or a Duchess of Devonshire by Gainsborough, or landscapes by Corot, or tapestries, or furniture, or objets d'art, or old prints, marbles and silverware. . . . It is a splendid work to fill our galleries with these valuable treasures, but would it not be even more splendid if one could induce our art-patron millionaires occasionally to forego investments in masterpieces of absolute and intrinsic value and persuade them rather to use such sums for the encouragement of a truly American national art?"

Mmznmm—Waschnnskuwhare

SURELY some of the adventuresome spirits who brave the crowds and the smoke and the love-making to ride on top the 'bus these hot nights will appreciate the following (typical?) conversation caught and immortalized by "The Soil":

"Dit cher gif 'im moneh f' der fare?" "Sure I gif 'im—f' von, you should pay "MMZNMM" Condocktare, how far goes der bus donton? "MMNNZN" Der companeh makes lots o' moneh t'day "MMMZNN" Vy n' cher git ah front set, ve kin look bedder "NZMMMM" He goes fast t'day, look a' Fricks oreddy "NNNNZM" Soright, der steel bisniss has der percentidge "ZZZMMN" I tink I go 'n dresses bisniss "MNZZZZ" Naw, naw, wholsel, wholsel, not retel "NMMZMZ" Ul tek ah chonce "ZMZMZN" Cholie knows der line, he got Murphy's list "NMZNNN" Vell, Ul talk it over 'n my mind "WASCHNNSKUWHARE."